

Cambodians Claim Victory Near Capital

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PNOMPENH, Cambodia, June 23 — Enemy forces attacked Prek Tameak, a town on the Mekong River 20 miles north of Pnompenh last night but were repulsed by Cambodian troops after a night of fighting.

The defenders told correspondents who drove there this morning that they had withstood a heavy mortar barrage and had beaten back five ground thrusts by North Vietnamese and Vietcong troops.

They also said they had captured a Soviet-made 122-mm. rocket — the first time that the six-foot-long weapon, long used by the enemy with devastating effect in South Vietnam, has been found so close to the Cambodian capital. They said that the rocket had been too heavy to carry and that they had buried it.

Elsewhere in Cambodia, the Government military spokesman reported only harassing enemy fire against Kompong Cham, 50 miles northeast of Pnompenh, and Siemreap in the northwest, where enemy forces ring the city and control the Angkor temple area.

Appeal on Angkor Temples

The spokesman, Maj. Am Rong, issued a renewed "appeal to international opinion" against what he termed "the increasing concentration of Vietcong and North Vietnamese in the Angkor Wat area." But in answer to questions at the daily military briefing he said he did not know how large the increase was, only that "villagers are reporting more and more of them around their houses."

Two weeks ago, when the government first announced that the enemy troops were in the region, the number was put at about a division, about 10,000 men.

The reported finding of the enemy rocket tended to confirm the fears of some diplomats and other observers here that this capital might soon come under mortar and rocket attack.

The mood here is increasingly pessimistic. The first secretary of one Western embassy decided today to ship home his valuable book collection — but to keep his wife with them.

Morale Believed Target

The attack on Prek Tameak appeared to be another hit-and-run attack near Pnompenh designed to increase Cambodians' doubts of their Government's ability to protect them.

The attack was the second

closest to the capital; several weeks ago the enemy assaulted and occupied Setbo, about 10 miles south of Pnompenh, and then withdrew.

Government troops on the west bank of the Mekong across from Prek Tameak told correspondents that the enemy mortar attack last night was followed by five ground assaults by elements of up to 1,000 enemy troops but that the Communists withdrew before dawn. The soldiers said they suffered four killed and 20 wounded, while the enemy losses were unknown.

The disclosure that they, too, were withdrawing to Pnompenh after the attack was greeted by disbelief and dismay by one allied military attaché, who said: "That'll just leave it open to the enemy again."

He and other experts believe that the area around Prek Tameak is the most likely route of approach for any ground or shelling attack on Pnompenh.

Still, the enemy would have to advance to within less than 10 miles of the city to launch a mortar shelling or rocket attack. The range of a 122-mm. rocket is put at about seven miles.

While interviewing the soldiers near Prek Tameak, the correspondents watched two Cambodian Air Force T-28

planes drop four canisters each of napalm on an undisclosed target about two miles north along the river's east bank. The planes also reportedly strafed the area with machine guns for about 10 minutes.

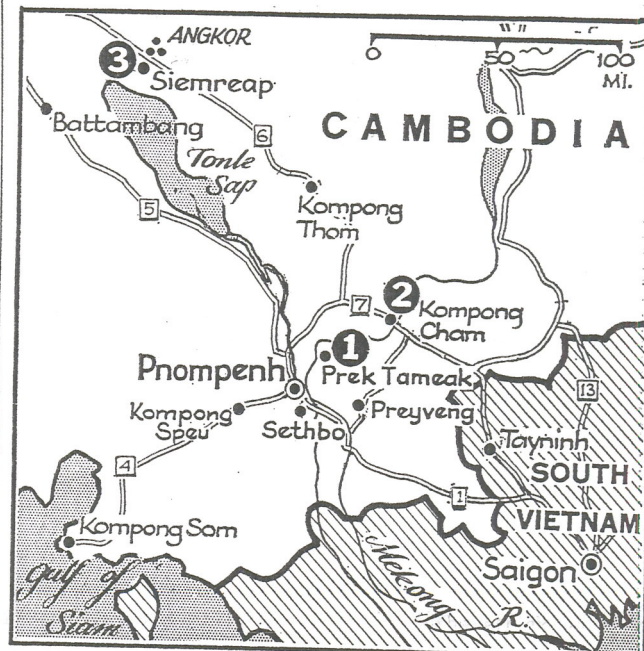
Photographs taken at Pnompenh airport showed one of the twin-boomed planes on the ground and a United States Air Force lieutenant with two Cambodian military men. The planes are normally equipped with machine guns and rocket pods loaded with white phosphorous rockets used for marking targets for artillery or other aircraft.

A United States Command spokesman, told about the photograph, said he had "nothing to report" about the plane or pilot.

It was the first report of United States planes flying support for Cambodian troops.

The witnesses who saw the OV-10's in action made clear they did not see any United States jet fighter-bombers attack enemy positions in close support of the Cambodian troops.

The Pentagon said yesterday that United States warplanes were striking as deep as 100 miles inside Cambodia, but only in raids against enemy troop and supply lines. Kompong Thom's 95 miles from the border.



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A Communist attack on Prek Tameak (1) north of capital was reported repulsed. Enemy was said to have directed harassing fire on Kompong Cham (2) and Siemreap (3).